# Hidden Weapons

## Disclaimer

This material has been made available for research and reference purposes only. Readers are strongly advised against obtaining or manufacturing any of the weapons referred to herein, as the majority are unlawful to possess. It is not our intent that anyone break the law or wrongfully harm others. Be aware that the majority of the weapons referred to are currently available from numerous sources, and may very well be encountered in the hands of criminals. We feel that it is important to know what one might be facing when confronted by criminals on the street.

## Contents



## Introduction

Hidden weapons are not the same as invisible, or improvised, weapons. Rather, they are specifically intended to be implemented as weapons, and are designed so as to provide for maximum concealment upon one's person.

Being designed specifically as weapons, they tend to be far more damaging than improvised weapons, which were originally intended for much different purposes. Because of their nature,

hidden weapons are often prohibited by law. Depending on one's jurisdiction, as well as the type of weapon in question, punishment can range from confiscation to years of imprisonment. Be sure to research the laws regarding weapon possession in your area before considering procurement of any exotic weaponry.

Some of these weapons are favored by gang members, ex-convicts, and professional criminals. These people are typically substance abusing repetitive felons who will not be deterred from obtaining a weapon they want simply because it has been prohibited. If your occupation, environment, or lifestyle tends to bring you into contact with such people, you run a high risk of being attacked with a weapon in the event of a violent confrontation. This section will briefly discuss how such weapons are used, where on the person they are typically concealed, and take notice of any significant weaknesses a weapon might have.

A few of the weapons listed are extremely nasty and highly illegal. Such weapons are typically the tools of assassins (whether criminal, terrorist or officially sanctioned) and would never be used by a true warrior. However, many freakish deviates fancy themselves "ninja commandos" and could conceivably procure or manufacture such devices to carry upon their persons. If you become involved in an altercation with such an individual, it is good to know what you might be up against.

Exotic weaponry has long been a subject of fascination for many who walk the warrior path. In addition to being informative, this section is meant to be entertaining as well.

A partial listing of common hidden weapons follows. For purposes of brevity, this section is far from complete, as the various types of hidden weapon number in the hundreds. Many hidden weapons had only limited production or were handmade prototypes, thus are difficult to acquire. Most of the weapons listed here are currently available. Mundane weapons (such as lockblades, hunting knives, and handguns) have been excluded from this section, as their inclusion would've taken up a lot of room telling you stuff that you probably already know.

## Blades & Such

Blades are the favored carry weapon of streetfighters, gangbangers, and paroled felons, and you are guaranteed to encounter them if you spend any amount of time on the streets. Criminals like blades for many different reasons. First, they are cheap and easily available, which enables them to be quickly tossed if a search appears probable. Second, they are small, lightweight, and easily concealed. Third, they are far more intimidating and damaging than empty hands. Fourth, many criminals mistakenly believe that blades are "untraceable" weapons which cannot be connected to them once their prints have been wiped off. Fifth, in most instances, possession of a blade (particularly a folder, boxcutter, or small kitchen knife) will carry a far less serious penalty than possession of a handgun. And finally, blades are silent (which gives the criminal greater opportunity to avoid attracting unwanted attention).

If you are a policeman, bouncer, or biker, you will probably be attacked with a blade at least once.

**SHIVS:**

"Shiv" is commonly defined as a small, thin, knife (usually double-edged) made from a single piece of material (usually steel) and designed for maximum concealment. They are lightweight and have little profile.

Shivs, usually meant to frustrate common "pat down" weapon checks, are seldom worn on one's belt or dropped in one's pocket. Because of their small size and light weight, people have gotten very creative with methods of concealed carry. Shivs are commonly worn in wristband rigs or sheaths stitched to the outside of one's boot. Other popular modes of carry include sheaths sewn under one's lapel or inside one's jacket, sheaths pinned under one's tie, or sheaths worn around one's neck on a lanyard or breakaway chain. Sheaths tend to be either form fitting plastic or magnetized to provide maximum retention. Lesser seen modes of carry include thigh rigs (intended for ladies), garter rigs, and behind-the-neck rigs (usually requiring a figure-8 elastic harness worn under one's shirt). Clandestine modes of carry include being concealed in the heel of a shoe or sewn in the lining of a jacket. Shivs tend to be professionally ground with skeletonized handles and top quality sheaths, and can cost well over fifty dollars, but many cheaply made imitations can be had for under ten.

Shivs tend to be stainless steel, as they are intended to be worn close to the body and must resist corrosion caused by exposure to perspiration. Shivs are also available composed of fiberglass, titanium, or ceramics — lightweight materials which will pass through metal detectors unnoticed. Several versions of fiberglass or plastic knives are concealed within the handles of combs and hairbrushes.

Shivs have short blades, typically between one and three inches, thus are unlikely to kill except in the event of a successful attack to the throat. Viable targets include the solar plexus and kidneys, but the face and hands may be slashed at to deter an attack. The typical shiv is a "throwaway" weapon, designed to be stuck in someone's head or neck and discarded. They are favored by intelligence agents as part of their concealed "escape & evasion" kit.

Similar to a shiv, but better, is the Mini-Culloden from Cold Steel. It is worn around the neck in a form-fitting Kydex sheath attached to a lanyard, and has a non-slip shock-absorbing Kraton handle. The 3.5" blade is single-edged with a needle-sharp point and is available with either a plain or serrated edge. Its design is based on that of the skean-dhu (sometimes seen spelled as: sgian-dubh) garter knife still worn by traditional Scotsmen. However, this small blade obviously has no utilitarian uses whatsoever — it has been designed solely as a "weapon of last resort."

**SHANKS:**

Shanks are commonly defined as poor quality knife-like weapons, often homemade, carried for the express purpose of stabbing someone. Due to their low cost or makeshift nature, they are usually discarded immediately after use. They are not intended for utilitarian purposes, and seldom have a sharp cutting edge.

One of the more frequently encountered shanks is the Pakistani boot knife. This weapon typically costs about $5 and has a dull double-edged blade with a stubby tang that is epoxied to

the handle. The blades are typically chrome-plated or blackened to conceal the poor quality of the metal. If used as a utility blade, the Pakistani boot knife will quickly break. These knives are typically worn in a leather sheath with a snap release and spring clip. The snap release often catches on the knife when drawn, so it is sometimes cut off. The "belt or boot" spring clip is usually chrome-plated, which reflects light like a mirror; and it will not secure itself to most boots properly, resulting in the sheath remaining on the blade when "drawn." Similarly designed knives of marginally better quality are available for about $10, but they are garbage as well — and they are the best of the weapons in this category.

Another type of shank commonly found on the streets are the cheap imported copies of "tactical folders." These folding jokes are always made of poor quality materials, fail to take a proper edge, and often break within days (if not hours) of purchase. The blades often are either too tight to open one-handed, or are so loose that the blade rattles when locked into place. The locks typically are of such poor quality that the knife will close simply by rapping the spine of the blade against a table top (which means it could easily fold upon one’s fingers during use). These knives usually are equipped with thumbstuds and pocket-clips, and often have blades exceeding 4" in length, but they are garbage nonetheless — they have all the performance of an aluminum tent stake! However, due to their sharp appearance (wicked-looking blades with colored aluminum handles that have rubberized inserts), low price (often under $5), and easy availability (flea markets, novelty shops, and street vendors), they have found their way into the pockets of street people and juvenile delinquents everywhere.

Small kitchen knives, like paring knives and steak knives, are also regularly encountered (as is the occasional "letter opener"). Having no hilt, one’s hand can easily slide up onto the blade upon stabbing into bone or heavy material. Sometimes the handle is wrapped with layers of tape to provide for a better grip. These knives are often simply dropped in one’s pocket, where they can snag on the lining upon being drawn or injure the owner in the event of a fall, although a rudimentary sheath can easily be fabricated from a piece of folded cardboard wrapped in tape. Sheathed like so, the knife can be tucked in one’s waistband or boot.

Makeshift shanks (such as those found in correctional facilities) are usually constructed from thin pieces of scrap metal. The metal is tediously worked (often by repeatedly scraping it across the floor) until it is pointed enough to stab with, before the handle is wrapped for a better grip. Sharpened plastic, broken glass, and wooden stakes (as when a pool cue or broomstick is snapped) can also serve as functional shanks.

Criminals who carry shanks usually favor the solar plexus as a target for their attack, either stabbing into this area hard before violently pumping the handle (commonly referred to as "running the gears), or stabbing multiple times very quickly (usually in an uncontrolled frenzy). A thick leather jacket will usually protect this area quite well. Criminals rarely attempt to slash with a shank.

**SPIKES:**

Spikes come in a variety of designs. Some are similar to a large headless nail. Some have handles or knurled grips. Some have a point on either end. Most are round with a simple point at the end, but a few are triangular or square with sharpened edges and blood grooves. They are simple, but nasty, weapons.

Double-pointed spikes are intended for throwing, and are referred to as shuriken. It takes months to gain a reasonable degree of proficiency at sticking them in targets, but in actual combat situations even an expert has only about a 50% chance of sticking one in a moving target with accuracy. Heavy spikes can sink deep into soft tissue, and even stick in bone, easily delivering a disabling strike. Double pointed spikes can also be grasped in either hand and used for ripping and gouging. They are commonly carried in groups of three or four in forearm rigs.

Single-point spikes, including those with handles, can also be thrown — but a high level of mastery is required to get them to stick with regularity and power. Single-point spikes are almost exclusively used to stab with. In some ways the spike is superior to the blade; for instance, it is more durable, provides better penetration through heavy clothing and bone, requires only a minute with a piece of sandpaper to resharpen, and is far less expensive. Some spikes are composed of either fiberglass or titanium, which would enable them to bypass magnetometers.

Spikes with handles include ice picks, awls, and sharpened screwdrivers. They provide a much more comfortable and reliable grip than the knurled and grooved grips on the solid metal versions. Better grip means better penetration and less likelihood of droppage. Affixed to a lanyard, they become like a "rope javelin" which can be swung, thrown, and retrieved. Many awls are fitted with a "T" handle, and can be used as a punch knife.

Rigging knives have a blunt-tipped sheepsfoot blade, as well as a curved "marlinspike" (designed to loosen knots) which is thick enough to be repeatedly driven through a car door without sustaining any discernable damage. Simply pressing on a hinged "shackle" releases the spring tension on the marlinspike, allowing it to be flipped open with one hand, after which it will lock firmly in place. Being both legal and unobtrusive, a quality rigging knife is a fine choice of weapon.

Spikes are sometimes hidden within common objects. Spring loaded spikes which lock into position have been built into pens and combs. An umbrella is available with a handle that detaches to reveal a spring steel spike over a foot long. Spikes are often found hidden within pens, sometimes fabricated from an empty ballpoint with a thick nail wrapped with masking tape stuffed inside.

Triangular spikes with blood grooves and sharpened edges were designed by the Allied clandestine services of WWII as a hidden weapon for their agents. Not only would it both stab and cut, but the suction-busting bloodgrooves allow for easy extraction, and the triangular wound cavity is self-supporting (it will not close, bleeding freely). Reproductions of the "OSS sleeve knife" can cost over a hundred dollars, but are well made and have value to collectors. Lower quality copies, in both triangular and square versions, are available for around twenty bucks.

Unlike most cheap knives, spikes (particularly those with substantial handles) are capable of piercing bone as well as armor. Spikes can be driven through the cranium to attack the brain (usually resulting in a "quick kill"), or slammed through the sternum to attack the heart. Heavy clothing, leather jackets, and even soft body armor will do little to protect one against a forceful thrust from a sharpened spike. Furthermore, the puncture wounds from a spike attack usually

results in minimal external bleeding, giving the appearance of a superficial wound which might be overlooked by harried emergency personnel conducting triage.

**RAZORS:**

Straight razors are nasty weapons. They will part heavy clothing like paper, will cut flesh at the lightest touch, and weigh next to nothing. However, they seldom cut more than an inch deep — even with the most forceful slashes. Often, cuts from this thin blade heal without leaving a scar. Razor attacks are terrifying and bloody, but seldom result in death.

Razors are commonly dropped in one's front pants pocket, but can also be slipped in a boot or taped behind the neck. Professional badasses who favor the razor may sew hidden pockets into their clothing or even fabricate a "behind-the-neck" rig to carry their razor(s). They are nearly weightless and incredibly fast. They can be extended to their full length for extra range, but the deepest cuts are inflicted by folding the razor back across one's knuckles and delivering grazing punches, dragging the blade hard across your opponent.

Viable targets include the forehead, face, arms, groin, and throat (the only lethal target). A hard strike to the arm can cut blood vessels, muscles, and nerves; possibly resulting in a "flail arm" which will be paralyzed forever. A hard strike to the groin can result in massive blood loss. A powerful horizontal slash to the abdomen has the potential to disembowel (although this is unlikely). Even though a razor is unlikely to kill, it can maim quite easily. Very few assailants faced with a razor would attempt to take it away from you. It is much more of a deterrent than a pocketknife, but is illegal to carry concealed nearly everywhere.

A related weapon, the "boxcutter" utility knife (sans guard) has an inch-long, single-edged triangular blade that can be used to poke, gouge, and rip flesh. If it has a metal handle, the butt can be used to hammer with as well. It is a cheap and nasty weapon, favored by street punks due to its availability and low price, but is nowhere near as effective as a deftly wielded straight razor. Disposable utility knives, particularly those with breakaway blades, tend to be far too flimsy to be effective for more than a single cut, but they are often encountered on the street. Razor scrapers are nasty, and highly portable, but are awkward to bring into action.

Loose single-edged razor blades are sometimes carried concealed. They are relatively safe to transport provided their protective cardboard cover remains in place. Typically, a single razor blade is held between the fingers and used to slap with, although retention is tenuous, and one is likely to inadvertently slice deep into one's one finger, possibly resulting in paralysis. On rare occasions, razor blades have been clenched in the teeth, melted into a plastic toothbrush handle (commonly referred to as a "sissy shank"), or fitted into a slot on one's footwear (usually just prior to an altercation). Loose razor blades tend to cause only superficial wounds, and rely primarily upon psychological shock to be effective. Their chief danger is their ability to be concealed virtually anywhere. Razor blades are most commonly dropped in one's pocket, but they've also been discovered: in hatbands, in wallets, under sweatbands, taped to the skin, sewn into shirts, and concealed within footwear.

**BUTCHER KNIVES:**

For our purposes, the term "butcher knife" shall include chef's knives, carving knives, and meatcutting knives with blades exceeding 6" in length.

Butcher knives are typically of sturdy construction, and tend to be much sharper than any other blade you might encounter on the street (with the exception of razors). This, combined with its length and sharp point, make it one of the most formidable weapons you can encounter on the street. If you're ever faced with a butcher knife, and don't have a magnum revolver on your person, my advice to you would be: run!

Sheaths are often improvised by folding a piece of cardboard over the blade, or wrapping it in rags, then covering it with a thick layer of tape. The sheathed blade can then be stuck in one's waistband or back pocket.

**DAGGERS:**

A dagger is commonly defined as a double-edged fighting knife. Fighting knives with only a partial top-edge are usually categorized as dirks. Daggers and dirks with short blades are usually referred to as "boot knives."

Daggers are nasty weapons, designed to be stabbed deeply into an enemy's vital organs. They usually have blades at least 6" in length, so as to easily pierce the heart by way of stabbing up under the sternum. Both military and medieval versions exist. They are favored by serious knifefighters who carry their blade for the sole purpose of combat. Daggers have no utilitarian applications and are specifically prohibited as deadly weapons in many jurisdictions.

Most of the daggers encountered on the streets are cheap imported garbage that amounts to little more than an extended shank. They tend to have dull blades with broken tips, and the blade often wobbles in the handle. Most daggers based on the "Fairbairn-Sykes" design fall into this category. Daggers are often worn at the belt, although a number of unusual sheaths, harnesses, and rigs are available.

**TANTOS:**

Based on an ancient Japanese design, tantos are single-edged combat knives with a chisel-like "armor-piercing" point. They vary greatly in quality. A properly made tanto can repeatedly be driven into a car door or steel drum without significant damage to the blade. A Kevlar vest offers minimal protection against such a weapon.

Cold Steel makes a number of top quality versions of the tanto, with rubberized grips and "skullcrusher" pommels. Most of the cheap imported knockoffs of this fine product feature dull brittle blades that easily separate from the handles they're epoxied to when subjected to stress.

Unlike daggers, this combat knife can effectively be utilized as a tool for heavy work, and is as legal as a hunting knife of similar length. Tantos are usually worn at the belt.

**SAWBACK KNIVES:**

Sawback knives (commonly referred to as either "survival" or "Rambo" knives), as described in this section, are large (over 6" blade) fixed-blade sheath knives with a row of saw-teeth along the spine. Most sawback knives are designed with hollow handles for storing matches, fish-hooks, and other "survival gear" (although, much more frequently, these water-resistant compartments contain money and drugs).

Sawback knives are surprisingly common on the street. This is due primarily to their menacing appearance combined with their (typically) low cost. The most frequently encountered version incorporates a bottle-opener behind the saw-teeth and is distinguished by the large bulbous compass set into the threaded end-cap. This travesty’s cheap stainless-steel blade is affixed to the aluminum handle with a drop of epoxy, and can detach if subjected to strong lateral pressure. This version has been seen offered for sale at flea markets, on sidewalks, and in magazines for prices ranging from five to twelve dollars.

Cheap sawback knives are valued by street people due to their wicked appearance. They are dangerous primarily due to their blade length (typically between eight and twelve inches), although the edge is usually rather dull, and the clip point is unsuitable for deep penetration. While it is possible to be ripped by the sawback, it is primarily for show (and often proves to be unfunctional). However, in the unlucky event that you are stabbed in the belly, if your attacker chooses to pull the blade back out the saw-teeth will snag on your guts and disembowel you.

Sawback knives are rather large, and are generally concealed under a long coat. Although they are sometimes carried on one’s person, they are far more frequently stowed in one’s vehicle or home, within easy reach. Most sawback knives are shoddy imported garbage. Top quality sawback survival knives typically start at well over a hundred dollars, and thus are unlikely to be encountered on the street (except in the hands of a woodsman).

**PUNCH KNIVES:**

Also known as "push daggers (or dirks)," "palm knives," and "T-handled knives;" punch knives provide an impressive combination of penetration and retention. The blade, commonly double-edged, projects between the knuckles of the fist, stabbing and withdrawing with each punch. It can be used effectively by any unskilled person.

Punch knives come in a variety of sizes, from miniature keychain versions to the huge medieval katar designed to pierce armor while providing protection for the wrist against sword strikes. Typically, blades vary from two to five inches in length. Keychain knives, with their inch-long blades and puny grips, will do far more damage than a jagged "punch ring," but will not kill and do not provide a sure grip; furthermore, they are difficult to unsheath quickly. "Belt buckle knives" are poorly designed, difficult to draw quickly, prohibited in many jurisdictions, and are to be avoided. Some small boot knives lock into "T-handle" configuration at the push of a lockblade-type release button.

The common punch knife has a substantial grip that absorbs the force of impact into the palm, provides for easy withdrawal, and will not be dropped under circumstances that could result in the loss of a straight handled blade (slippery handle, wrenched blade, forceful impact, or injury

to weapon hand). Often, they are designed with a shock absorbing rubberized grip for added comfort. The Safekeeper from Cold Steel is one of the best punch knives available.

Any punch will result in a stab wound. With practice, slashes and attacks from various angles can also be delivered effectively. Since the punch knife is commonly used by unskilled persons to deliver only straight-line stabs to the upper body, it is sneered at by many knifefighters. It is not nearly as flexible as a straight handled knife in the hands of a novice, but can deliver a variety of attacks once one gains familiarity with it. The punch knife requires learning an entirely new method of knifefighting to gain versatility.

It is illegal to carry a concealed punch knife in most jurisdictions, as it is designed primarily as a weapon. Anywhere on the trunk can be attacked, as contact with bone will not cause you to inadvertently drop this weapon. Due to the secure grip and amount of force an attacker can direct into a thrust, most double-edged versions can easily penetrate a leather jacket, as well as soft body armor. These are incredibly dangerous knives.

**KNUCKLE KNIVES:**

"Knuckle knives" are an unusual class of exotic weapon, not to be confused with "trench knives" (which are discussed later). There are many varieties, typically consisting of an unconventionally designed set of metal knuckles with a small blade (or series of blades) attached. This used to be an extremely rare weapon, which was invariably homemade, but recently a number of "fantasy designs" have been marketed to "collectors" at inexpensive prices through flea markets, gun shows, and mail-order catalogs. As a result, they have become rather popular amongst the criminal element.

Nearly all commercially available knuckle knives are poorly constructed imports which fail to take a good edge. Their attractiveness lies in their menacing appearance, as well as their perceived ability to puncture with each crushing blow. Due to their odd shapes, they tend to be fitted with unusually large belt sheaths which would preclude a quick draw, and would also be difficult to conceal — even under a light jacket. Their primary strength is that, due to their design, they are nearly impossible to drop, which makes it difficult to disarm an attacker so armed.

The "original" knuckle knife is probably the kerambit, a weapon indigenous to Malaysia. It consists of a crudely designed set of brass knuckles (lacking palm brace) with a small curved blade protruding from the bottom of the wielder’s fist. It is intended for extremely close combat (grappling), and the "spur" is meant to tear out an opponent’s throat.

Contemporary knuckle knives typically consist of artistically designed cast aluminum grips (which cover one’s knuckles), which have a small "punch knife" type blade on top, and possibly smaller blades (or spikes) set into either side. They are often quite impressive looking, but have proved to be a poor choice of weapon. If side blades (or spikes) are included, they can easily interfere with deep penetration.

Another version is simply a flat knucklebow which has been sharpened so that an edge lies across one’s knuckles — much like sharpened metal knuckles (although they often lack

fingerholes). This edge can be convex (like an ulu chopper) or concave (like a crescent knife), and often may be scalloped (forming a series of small points) or have projections. Sometimes small blades will jut out of either end of the grip, turning it into a "double-knife."

This weapon is illegal to carry on one's person in all 50 states. In some jurisdictions, you could be prosecuted simply for having one secured in a display case hung on your wall! If a cop finds one of these on your person, you are definitely going to jail for a very long time. It would be stupid to choose such a weapon when so many other options exist.

**DOUBLE-KNIVES:**

A "double-knife" is a knife which has two blades — one on either end of the handle. They are usually folders, but fixed-blade versions have been encountered as well. Dual-bladed pocketknives without lock mechanisms are not considered to be weapons, and would not fall into this category.

There are a few double-lockblades commercially available — most of which have either thumbstuds or blade cutouts — which would be considered to be "double-knives." I have seen a few automatic versions as well (although these are extremely rare, and usually only one blade is spring-loaded). Typically, the blades are under 4" in length (and often are under 3"). When both blades have been locked into place, a blade will protrude from either end of one's fist.

Fixed-blade versions typically fall into the "fantasy knife" category, and are more suited for display purposes than actual use. Homemade versions have also been encountered, either made from a pair of blades fixed in a single handle, or ground from a file (or thin metal bar) and wrapped with tape in the center. Occasionally, a yawara fistload will be fitted with a small blade (or spike) on either end, which would also fit the parameters of this category.

Despite their menacing appearance, double-knives are poor weapons. They usually are equipped with neither hilt, nor finger-grooves, allowing one's hand to slide over the blade upon impact with bone. Furthermore, the wielder would constantly be in danger of accidentally stabbing or cutting himself, as one of his blades would often be pointed back in his direction during the heat of combat.

**EXPANDABLE BLADES:**

An "expandable blade" knife typically appears to be a weird-looking, short-bladed, single-edged sheath knife, but upon depressing a lock button, the blade can be folded out of the handle to reveal that it is actually nearly eight inches long! Needless to say, if you are unfamiliar with such a weapon, facing one can be somewhat disconcerting.

The truth is, these monster knives are crap. They became popular for a few years during the 80's, when flea-markets were flooded with them. They were typically marketed under the names "Cobra" or "Othello," and sold for under $15. The blades are usually as dull as a butter knife, the folding crossguard often comes detached, the handles are usually made of hollow plastic formed to look like stag horn, and they come in a crappy vinyl sheath. They are garbage.

When the blade is folded into its compact mode, it is actually fairly sturdy, as it becomes like a full tang hunting knife (albeit a poor quality one). When expanded, however, the knife may appear far more menacing, and the reach will be greatly extended, but the lock and pin are so cheaply constructed that the knife could easily fall apart if subjected to lateral pressure or impact with a solid object. Do not let this "weapon" intimidate you . . . it is just a cheap novelty item.

**SWITCHBLADES:**

Switchblades (as commonly defined by law) are knives which open automatically via spring propulsion upon manipulation of a button, lever, or switch. They typically fall into one of two categories, side-openers and front-openers. Side-openers are what most people think of when the term "switchblade" is used, and encompass probably 85% of all automatic knives in circulation. Upon activation, a spring flips open this folding knife and it is locked into place. Older knives (like the ones popular with youth gangs of the 1950s) typically utilized a bent piece of ill-tempered spring steel (which often snapped or lost resilience over time), whereas newer blades marketed towards military personnel utilize a type of coil spring. Knives of this sort manufactured in Mexico and the Far East tend to be shoddy rubbish.

Front-openers usually have a weak dual-spring mechanism that allows the lightweight blade to be both snapped out as well as retracted at the touch of a switch. The blade is held in place by means of small brass tabs which are easily broken. If you place your finger over the blade slot and activate the knife, the blade will not break the skin and will slide back and forth loosely until pulled out to the locked position. This novelty item is a poor weapon, and the cheap blade provided doesn’t even make a decent letter opener.

A rarely encountered variant of the front-opener uses a powerful coil spring to snap the typically double-edged blade into place. This weapon is designed to be pressed against a victim’s body before being activated, thus making it is ideal for discreetly backstabbing someone in a crowd. In order to retract the blade, it must be unlocked before pressing the tip firmly into the floor — often, two hands are required to do this. Knives of this sort are sometimes offered for sale in Tijuana and other Mexican border towns.

Switchblades are favored by street punks, barroom brawlers, and other emotionally immature criminals. They were becoming scarce for a time, but there was a resurgence in their popularity due to a legal loophole which allowed them to be sold through the mail in "uncompleted kit form." They are more of a novelty than anything, generally being too flimsy and dull to be relied upon for fighting or work, although they are specifically prohibited as "deadly weapons" in most states.

Switchblades are illegal to possess in most jurisdictions (with limited exceptions made for hunters, trappers, fishermen, collectors, and certain disabled persons), tend to be poorly constructed, and break fairly easily. Lint, gunk, and corrosion will make them jam up and fail to function. Quality lockblades with thumbstuds or cutouts can be opened nearly as fast, are far more reliable, and are legal to carry on one’s person. Carrying an illegal switchblade is stupid when such an alternative is available.

**BALISONGS:**

Balisongs are often called "butterfly knives," "Manila folders," or (incorrectly) "gravity knives." Invented in the Phillipines about a century ago, they consist of a pair of free-swinging handles connected to a blade by a pair of pins. When closed, the two handles ensheath the blade. To open the knife, one of the handles is grasped while the other is flipped away by means of inertia, exposing the blade. With both handles firmly grasped, the blade is locked securely into position. The balisong is far sturdier than most lockblades, can be opened nearly as fast as a switchblade, and cannot unlock and fold on one's fingers so long as the handles are grasped. The balisong can be flipped open about a dozen different ways, and martial artists who favor this weapon can do so very quickly in an impressive display of manual dexterity. Even in relatively unskilled hands, with a little bit of practice this knife can be spun and whirled with a menacing clicking noise, making it popular among gang members and street punks who enjoy intimidating civilians.

Most commercially available balisongs have a latch on one of the handles that fits into a slot on the other, effectively locking the handles together when the knife is opened or closed. This latch often gets in the way (sometimes inadvertently locking unexpectedly or even chipping the blade's edge) while flipping the knife open and closed in practice, so many practitioners either remove it or custom order latchless versions. Wrapping the latch with a small strip of cut electrical tape can help prevent this.

Balisongs vary greatly in quality. Most of the ones on the street are imported garbage with dull blades that either fail to open due to excessive tightness, or fall apart due to loose pins. Handmade balisongs from the Phillipines tend to be very high carbon steel which can take a fine edge, but requires constant maintenance to prevent corrosion. Old balisongs from Taylor and Frost cutlery were of passable quality, but are seldom seen anymore. Benchmade offered good quality mass-produced balisongs, as well as custom variants (which often exceeded $300), and has recently reintroduced the balisong in a modernized version (titanium handles and hex-nuts for pins) which costs around $200. Bear cutlery offered a balisong recently, but a lot of people were disappointed with it. Blades made by Jaguar and Manila Folder are popular, but rather shoddy. The most commonly encountered balisong on the street is the cheap no-name brand that either sticks shut or has loose pins — it's like fighting with an aluminum tent stake.

Balisongs are as legal as lockblades in most jurisdictions, but some municipalities have specifically prohibited them. Even when they are not prohibited under state law, they are sometimes prohibited under local ordinances. If a local ordinance is violated, the knife in question can be confiscated and its owner subject to a fine.

**GRAVITY KNIVES:**

A true gravity knife (sometimes called a "fall-out knife") will open automatically at the touch of a button (or release lever) when the knife is pointed at the ground, with the blade sliding straight out of the handle and locking into place. Balisongs, as well as common lockblades with loose mechanisms, are often incorrectly categorized as "gravity knives" by the misinformed (who often count police officers amongst their numbers). Many people have wrongfully been

arrested (or even incarcerated) for possessing a contraband "gravity knife" because the legal definition of the weapon is often vague, and the police and courts have chosen to define it as they saw fit. True gravity knives are seldom encountered on the street. They include the bulky "Luftwaffe paratrooper knife" as well as the flimsy chrome-plated piece of garbage marketed as the "OSS paratrooper knife." It is unlikely you will ever see one of these knives outside of someone's collection (incidentally, neither knife is of significant value to collectors).

**THROWING KNIVES:**

Concealable throwing knives come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and weights, and are offered by numerous companies. Some of them are very well made, while others are little more than flat tent stakes. The typical throwing knife is made of a single piece of steel with a leaf-shaped double-edged blade sharpened only at the tip. They sometimes come with a belt sheath, but are more often seen in a forearm rig. Occasionally, a knife thrower may carry a blade behind his neck — either in a special rig or a sheath sewn inside his jacket collar.

This may come as a shock to fans of commando and ninja movies, but 90% of what most people think they know about knife throwing is utter bullshit. To begin with, knife throwing is not easy; in fact, throwing a knife is probably the most difficult aspect of weaponcraft to master. Many people attempt it at one point in their lives, but very few gain even basic proficiency. . . after realizing the true nature of knife throwing (which is basically showmanship — a false thing with which to impress others), most people give up practicing within a month. While there have been a handful of legendary masters who could effectively throw a knife in combat, I believe that less than one person in a million has the capability to develop such a skill, regardless of how many years are devoted to practice. While some people (often unpracticed individuals impulsively throwing a knife, for whatever reason) have injured or killed another person by sticking a knife in them from a distance, such instances are rare and due primarily to luck (or lack thereof). If you pick up a knife (kitchen, hunting, folding, ect.) and throw it at a randomly selected target, you have approximately a 20% chance of scoring a direct hit. Countless Hollywood "action-adventure" flicks have lied to us.

There are several ways to throw a knife, and most practitioners tend to stick to only a single method. If practice is not adhered to on a daily basis, one's ability quickly deteriorates. People who can throw a knife with precision typically can do so only from a set distance with focused concentration. If the distance of the target or force of the throw is altered, the blade will fail to fit point first and will rebound. Similarly, if a knife of differing length, weight, or balance is used, the spin of the blade will be altered. Under combat conditions, it is nearly impossible to stick a knife in a moving target more than ten feet away. . . it is far more likely to bounce off one's enemy, inflicting only a bruise or superficial cut.

Typically, the rule on knife throwing is to avoid it whenever possible. You lose your weapon, arm your enemy, and generally look like an idiot. If, for whatever reason, you must throw a knife (this applies to any knife) it is best to just grab it by the tip and huck it at the target's center of mass as hard as possible, then turn and run because it'll probably do less damage than a rock if it hits, but it will definitely make him hesitate. If you have a large knife, it is best to grasp it by the handle and toss it underhand into your attacker's solar plexus from less than 5 feet away. From this distance, thrown in this manner, it is likely to stick (although this proven method apparently isn't dramatic enough for Hollywood). Practice short range knife throwing

using large cardboard appliance cartons as targets — wooden targets are more damaging to the blade and increase the potential of a dangerous rebound.

## Blunt Trauma

Cudgels, truncheons, fistloads, and other impact weapons are commonly found within reach of dangerous persons.

While the majority of bludgeons and clubs tend to be either of an improvised nature, or far too large to conceal upon one’s person, there are a few which fall into the category of "hidden weapons."

Be aware that, unlike blades, persons who choose to pack concealable impact weapons tend to be skilled in their use. This may be due to the fact that, because the wounds often do not result in massive blood loss, criminals will be less hesitant to use impact weapons and will be very experienced at doing so.

**BILLY CLUBS:**

Billy clubs, sometimes referred to as "billies," "nightsticks," or "truncheons," typically consist of a length of stout wood between 1 and 2 feet in length. Often, a knurled grip and lanyard are evident.

Billy clubs are prohibited weapons in many jurisdictions, but the definition of what a billy club is can vary greatly. Walking sticks and aluminum flashlights, however, are both far more effective than a billy club as well as perfectly legal.

Weapons similar to the billy club include: the escrima stick (usually used in pairs), the side-handled baton (the police version of the tonfa), aluminum "tire checkers" (roughly half the size of a tee-ball bat), the weighted warclub (of which dozens of versions exist), and the proverbial lead pipe (nowadays galvanized steel plumbing pipe or a cut-down length of rebar).

**KNUCKLES:**

Brass knuckles are available via mail order as "paperweights," but they are illegal to carry almost everywhere. Most sets of "knucks" have a projection that rests against the palm to absorb impact. Many have bumps or points on the knuckle surface to inflict additional damage.

The quality of brass knuckles available varies greatly. I have seen professionally designed knucks with a thin profile and smoothly polished surface, and I have seen crudely manufactured knucks made by pouring molten brass into a sand mould. Some poorly designed knucks have undersized or unevenly spaced fingerholes. Homemade versions often have no fingerholes at all, and resemble a flattened metal oval.

I have also seen knucks made from aluminum (for reduced weight) and plastic (which provides

a legal loophole in areas where "metal knuckles" are prohibited). Once I even saw a set fashioned from polished hardwood! Conceivably, they can be fashioned from any material which will protect one’s knuckles without bending or breaking

Some knives, like reproductions of WWI trench knives, have a set of knuckles built into the grip. These are nasty to come up against, but the knuckles limit one’s dexterity and make the knife illegal to carry. Folding knives which incorporate knuckles into the handle are typically poorly made imported crap.

Knuckles are designed to multiply the impact of your punches, and are effective even in unskilled hands. They are best used against bone. Viable targets include the jaw and the ribs, but anywhere you hit is going to sustain a painful crushing blow.

Similar to knucks are the gold-plated "4-finger rings" once favored by rappers, pimps, and drug dealers. Because they were so frequently employed as weapons, many jurisdictions soon classified them as prohibited "metal knuckles," and after a few attempts to bypass these laws by offering 3-finger (then 2-finger) versions, they quickly lost their popularity. They are seldom encountered anymore, as they were intended to be worn openly in an attempt to flaunt one’s wealth (as well as criminal proclivities), but soon proved to work as "cop magnets," which quickly became tiresome.

Metal knuckles are unlawful to possess nearly everywhere, but are occasionally seen sold via mail order as "novelty paperweights." Thin lightweight replicas are sometimes fashioned into belt buckles. They are decent weapons, but a yawara is just as good (and legal as well).

**SAPS:**

Saps come in two basic versions: slappers and blackjacks.

Slappers are flat paddle-shaped impact weapons, usually made of powdered lead and a strip of spring steel sewn between two flat pieces of leather. Having a large surface area, the force of impact is dispersed, rather than concentrated, so bones are unlikely to be broken. Slappers were designed to be used by policemen, prison guards, and mental ward orderlies to subdue violent individuals without inflicting serious injuries. Repeated blows to the head, however, can result in death. Those fancy weighted placekeepers sold at some bookstores are a legal version of the slapper. . . provided you’re carrying a suitable book as well.

Blackjacks are round lead weights affixed to the end of a coil spring and wrapped in leather. The force of the blow is highly concentrated, and will easily shatter bone. A light tap behind the ear is sufficient to knock most people unconscious. . . a forceful blow to the head will kill. A blackjack can be improvised by dropping a D-cell battery in a thin sock or nylon stocking and tying two knots — one behind the weight and one at the end of the handle. These two commonly available legal items can quickly be combined to form an illegal deadly weapon. If you are concerned about being frisked, you can carry the sock and battery in two separate pockets.

A self-defense device similar to the blackjack is being sold that consists of a small rod with a

cup at one end in which sits a small metal weight attached to a short retractable cable. When the device is swung, the weight is extended about an inch, and has flexibility but lacks spring tension. Grooves in the weight are designed to "trap DNA material for identification of the assailant". . . in other words, to make him bleed. A hurtful device that lacks the lethality of the blackjack.

**YAWARAS:**

Yawaras are extended fistloads that the ends can be used to strike with. They are commonly made from wood, but can also be made from metal or plastic. They are sometimes offered with tapered ends, for grinding into nerve cavities during submission holds; or with pointed ends, for actual penetration of bone and tissue. They usually have either rounded or flat ends. Some people think that a weighted fistload adds more impact to one’s punch, but there is a substantial risk of fracturing one’s unprotected fingers.

Yawaras are sometimes attached to keyrings, which can make them light flails (the most common version is marketed as the "Kubotan"). One steel yawara-like keychain (usually marketed as the "Ninja Keychain") has a pair of narrow perpendicular rods attached, so as to extend from between the knuckles when grasped, which will concentrate the total energy of a punch into two tiny areas, resulting in deep penetration and massive injury potential — in trained hands, this object is deadlier than brass knuckles. A weighted attachment for the AA Mini Mag-Lite (marketed as the "Mo-Gem") replaces the end cap and improves its application as a yawara as well as turning it into a small cosh. A short length of steel pipe makes an excellent improvised yawara. Closed pocketknives and metal pens make passable improvised yawaras, as will most solid objects of similar proportions.

Yawaras can be ground into selected pressure points and nerve cavities, which takes time to master, but can conceivably stop an attacker without unnecessary violence or risk of doing serious harm. Yawaras can also be used to crack skulls and sternums. In the hands of a proficient martial artist, the yawara is a lethal weapon. Because of its small size and innocuous appearance, the yawara is legal to carry nearly everywhere. Yawaras with concealed blades and spikes are available, but their possession is prohibited in many jurisdictions.

**STEEL BALLS:**

Solid meditation balls and large ball bearings can either be thrown or used as fistloads. A slap with a steel ball can crack bone or pulverize cinderblock.

Steel balls can be thrown with great accuracy for up to thirty feet, but are effective to about fifty. They will leave welts and can cause serious injury. Thrown with great force from close range, a steel ball can easily kill if the head is struck.

Steel balls can be carried in either a pocket or a pouch. If dropped in a sock or wrapped in a bandanna, a steel ball becomes a lethal flail. Commonly used for "meditation and relaxation," they would be overlooked in most searches (provided no more than 2 pair were found). "Magnetized massage balls" are similar to solid meditation balls, but are covered with knobby spikes. Rocks, batteries, and billiard balls all make passable substitutes.

## Cane Weapons

Dozens of weapons have been incorporated into the humble walking stick. Many of these weapons were designed during the mid 17th century, when it was fashionable for gentlemen to carry a walking stick whether it was necessary for support or not. Walking stick weapons tend to fall into several primary categories (although others exist): blasters, blades, and bludgeons.

**BLASTERS:**

Blasters are seldom seen outside of museums anymore, due to a federal restriction on "cane guns and other disguised firearms" that puts them in the same category as a suppressed machinepistol (requiring a class III FFL and $200 tax stamp). Almost all cane guns in existence are single-shot weapons, usually of the black powder "cap and ball" variety. Cobray once sold a conversion kit that enabled a certain brand of antique cane gun to fire .38 special ammunition, and illegal homemade versions have been found in several calibers (with .22 LR, .45 ACP, and .410 shotshell being most common, due to low pressure and availability of cheap barrels). Cane guns have incorporated a wide variety of firing mechanisms, most of which are slow into action and unsafe to carry at full cock. Some homemade cane guns use an electric filament to ignite a black powder charge — such a device can easily be fabricated without machine tools.

A lesser seen variant is the compressed air (or gas) fired cane gun. These are also single-shot weapons, and are capable of firing a lead or steel ball at lethal velocities. Poisoned pellets and darts have been fired from similar weapons by communist intelligence agents (for example, the Bulgarian "umbrella gun" used in several prominent assassinations). A related weapon is the tubular "gas gun" which uses an electrically fired charge to expel a small cloud of prussic acid directly into a target’s face, resulting in death from cyanide poisoning. Blowguns have also been incorporated into canes.

**BLADES:**

Blades usually refer to "sword canes," which come in several varieties. The typical sword cane is a single-edged blade, usually between 18" and 22" long, affixed to the cane’s grip and sheathed in the shaft. The unit can be held together by a variety of locking mechanisms, or simple friction. Most of the antique sword canes are of high quaility and command commensurate prices. Most of the modern reproductions I’ve seen are garbage with flimsy blades that won’t take an edge and bend out of shape upon impact. A well-designed sword cane’s shaft is sturdy enough to serve as a baton, giving you a weapon for either hand. Other "sword canes" I’ve seen either have a much shorter dagger blade or a spike instead of a true sword, but these tend to be more functional than the cheap imported reproductions. Dozens of variants on the basic sword cane design exist, and many are highly prized by collectors.

Similar to the sword cane is what I’ll call a "spear cane," for want of a better word. A spear cane is equipped with a blade or spike, usually under 12" in length, which projects from the bottom of the cane when revealed. Most often, the lower section of shaft is detached (instead of sliding the blade from the shaft by pulling on the handle), but is some versions the blade (or spike) is released by pressing a button, allowing the blade to snap into place (by means of a

coil spring or inertia) and lock. A type of metallic walking stick is available that screws apart to reveal a blade inside, then can be screwed back together in such a way as to form an effective short spear (I have seen several versions, of varying quality). Some walking sticks utilize a spiked ferrule (for "hiking.") which can be utilized in a similar manner.

**BLUDGEONS:**

Bludgeons are canes that are especially good for beating someone to death, and in some cases, that is what they were specifically designed to do. Any stout walking stick composed of hickory, black walnut, or various exotic hardwoods, will be dense, heavy, and difficult to break. Such a stick is far superior to a cane made of light wood or aluminum tubing when it comes to defense. Topped with a handle of solid brass, silver, or steel, it becomes a lethal mace. Also worthy of mention is the Irish blackthorne walking stick, which is studded with natural protrusions that will draw blood with every blow. Decorated canes with ornate extended ferrules as well as metal bands or inlays along their length are typically far too valuable to beat on someone with, but they work extremely well in this capacity.

Hammerhead walking sticks were once popular, and can be fabricated in one's workshop and properly decorated. A mountaineer's walking stick, with a spiked ferrule and topped with a mattock, would prove a fearsome weapon in skilled hands and would not draw undue notice. The traditional Polish ciupaga walking sticks feature an axelike handle in addition to a sharp pointed tip. The aforementioned bludgeon-type canes are typically legal to carry on the street (though if you are young and fit, the local constabulary might be inclined to confiscate your "fashion statement" and charge you with possession of a weapon), whereas the following are not.

"Leaded canes" typically refer to canes filled with lead (molten, powdered, or shot) to add weight for the specific purpose of breaking bones. The lead can fill the entire shaft, but is usually concentrated at the tip. These are seldom seen, but canes fashioned from lengths of steel pipe are. These are usually painted to look like a common wooden cane or walking stick, and typically are fitted with a rubber ferrule tip to eliminate the tell-tale clunking, and they are highly illegal.

Some canes with metal ball-style grips are designed to allow the ball to be detached from the shaft, revealing a short cable that allows it to be swung like a medieval flail. Some walking sticks are designed to screw apart into a pair of oversized nunchaku. Occasionally seen among practitioners of ninjutsu are canes which conceal long lengths of chain terminated by a weight or hook. One company specializing in sword canes also offered a version (marketed as the "mafia stick") which had a long spring billy (similar to the "Kiyoga steel whip," but fixed rather than collapsible) in lieu of a blade.

## Police Style Weapons

Non-lethal weapons favored by law enforcement personnel are commonly relied upon by honest citizens to defend themselves against predatory criminals. However, due to their availability, many criminals have obtained them for more nefarious purposes.

Criminals have often been on the receiving end of these weapons, and know from experience the extent of their capabilities. Pepperspray, especially, has been found in the possession of criminals, who use it to "teach a lesson" to persons who are rude to them, or to incapacitate someone prior to a "beatdown."

"Badge freaks" and other pseudo-cops (police impersonators) usually acquire police paraphernalia as part of their "identity." Rapists and serial killers (who often pretend to be plain-clothed officers) have sometimes used pepperspray or a stun gun to incapacitate their victims prior to snatching them.

**PEPPERSPRAY:**

Pepperspray is available in several concentrations and can be fired from a wide variety of aerosol canisters. These vary greatly in quality and reliability, and care must be taken in selecting one that will work when needed with a minimum of fumbling. Poorly designed canisters have buttons that jam. Typically, the higher the concentration the more effective the agent, but I have heard arguments disputing this. Most sprays are 10% oleoresin capsicum (cayenne pepper). Formulas containing CN or CS "tear gas" are seldom seen outside of the military, widely being considered obsolete and inappropriate for either police or civilian use. In the rare instances that CN is encountered, it is usually encapsulated within a bursting projectile, such as 40 mm grenade launcher rounds (which can generate enough heat to inadvertently start a fire). Most experts feel OC pepperspray is far more effective than either CN or CS.

Spray canisters usually fire either a thin stream of liquid (sometimes called a "shotgun stream") or a fine misting, at a variety of ranges. The average range is about 7 feet. "Foggers" fire a thick cloud over 15 feet away, and often appear like miniature fire extinguishers. Spray canisters can be fired in a series of short or long bursts, or can be emptied by keeping the activator button depressed (probably not a good idea). After several bursts, both volume and pressure will be significantly reduced, and you are strongly urged to replace the unit at your earliest convenience rather than continue to rely upon it. Units should also be replaced after their stamped expiration date.

Pepperspray can be squirted out of pens, flashlights, and wrist mounted devices, as well as fired from starter pistols or derringer-like flare projectors. I have seen one device which resembled a large plastic pistol with a wide cylindrical body, which was capable of firing a high-pressure stream at extended ranges (though, due to its considerable profile, it would be difficult to conceal under one’s jacket). Pepperspray can also be fired from concealed vehicle-mounted nozzles (usually mounted above the driver’s side window). ASP makes a yawara-style keyring which fires a high-pressure, cone-shaped blast from the base. The ASP "key defender" comes with one HEAT cartridge and one inert TEST cartridge for training, and extra dual cartridge packs are available. As the entire cannister is emptied at once, no second shot is available. A wide variety of hidden spray projectors exist, as well as grenades, boobytraps, and generators (large devices which produce massive volumes for crowd control), but these are not widely available.

Better, in many ways, than pepperspray is Mace Pepperfoam, which squirts out in a thick stream, sticks to its objective, and will not produce residual misting. The foam resembles

shaving cream, is easily aimed, and you will actually see the agent contacting your target. Not only does the OC impregnated foam obscure vision, but it affects only the target, preventing the room from becoming temporarily uninhabitable. Pepperfoam can actually be sprayed into the backseat of an automobile by the driver without affecting any of the other passengers. Furthermore, this product utilizes a top quality cannister which features a "flip-top" safety cap and thumb actuator button. Mace Pepperfoam should be your spray weapon of choice, unless your needs include filling a corridor with gas or dispersing large groups, in which case a fogger should be utilized.

Pepperspray is fired into the attacker's face, aiming for the mouth, nose, and eyes. If you extend your arm, the cannister can be grabbed or knocked aside, so be sure to keep it close to your body. Keep the stream firing steadily into the attacker's face (unless there are multiple attackers, in which case you'd attempt to hose them all down before fleeing), following him around as he turns his head. An inaccurate or partial application will not be as effective. Residual misting will effect an entire room for an extended period of time, depending on quality of ventilation (if you need to cross a contaminated area, keep one eye shut and do not breathe). It should not be sprayed into the wind (duh). Effects of pepperspray include impaired vision, choking, nausea, and general incapacitation.

It is a safe and effective non-lethal weapon, provided one has practiced enough to gain familiarity with it. Be warned that while OC pepperspray has the power to incapacitate most assailants if used correctly, it is not guaranteed to stop them. A determined assailant, or one under the influence of drugs, may continue to attack even after being sprayed in the face repeatedly. It works best against vicious dogs (who have a plethora of nerve endings on the mucous membranes of their wet noses) and cowardly punks.

CAUTION: Pepperspray is contained within a pressurized canister, so it must not be exposed to the heat of direct sunlight (left in one's car) nor packed in one's checked luggage when flying (cargo holds are not pressurized). Exposure to heat or fluctuations in barometric pressure can cause your spray canister to burst or leak.

**TELESCOPIC BATONS:**

Telescopic batons are extended by the inertia of a swing, or by a compressed coil spring, and lock in place. They vary greatly in quality, durability, and length. The best quality batons lock so securely in place they may be used to jab with. They are powerful weapons that can easily break bones. Too heavy to be simply dropped in a pocket, they require either a belt holster or "over-the-shoulder" rig.

ASP makes the world's finest telescopic batons in a variety of lengths, weights, and finishes. It is the impact weapon of choice for law enforcement personnel, collapsing into a non-threatening, "politically-correct" unit. Unfortunately, possession by civilians of this fine weapon is prohibited in many jurisdictions.

A similar weapon is the spring billy, sometimes called a "steel whip," "snapper cosh,"or "Kiyoga," (which was the brand name a popular version was marketed under) These are also telescopic, and are made of thick, tightly wrapped coils of spring steel rather than rigid tubing. They are typically rather short — about 16" fully extended. They will leave painful welts, but

will not break bones or kill (unlike the infamous spring coshes used in the trench warfare of WWI).

**CLUBBED FLASHLIGHTS:**

Aluminum multi-cell flashlights (such as those offered by Mag-Lite, Kel-Lite, and Streamlight) are often used in lieu of nightsticks by policemen. Unlike even the best quality wooden batons, a clubbed flashlight can smash cinderblocks into powder without incurring significant damage (if used correctly). Not only are clubbed flashlights both more effective and more useful than a billy club, but they are legal as well.

Multi-cell flashlights are available in either "C" or "D" width, with a capacity of between 2 and 8 batteries. The "C" width fits most hands best, and a capacity of 5 or 6 batteries is what most policemen tend to favor.

If you wish for your flashlight to appear less menacing, you can get one with a lower capacity (2 or 3 cells), possibly in a color other than black. A flashlight can be stuffed in a back pocket under one's jacket, hung from a belt ring, or carried in one's hand.

The collarbones, elbows, wrists, and knees make the best targets for this weapon. A blow to the back can shatter vertebrae, and a blow to the head can easily kill. The use of "maximum strength" batteries will significantly increase the flashlight's mass. Using just 1 or 2 maximum strength cells at the end will add power to one's swings.

**STUN GUNS:**

Stun guns come in various sizes and types, including batons, gloves, and dart-firing "Tasers," but the most commonly carried version looks like a narrow plastic box with a pair of prongs on one end which spark when a button is depressed. They are commonly sold for self defense.

We are told that the stun gun will drop a man to the floor unconscious. This is seldom the case. In order for it to be truly effective, it must be pressed against the assailant's body and held in place for several seconds. . . this is not as easy as it sounds, as it involves wrestling and grappling with the assailant.

Quick shocks, of a second or less, will accomplish nothing. They will sting a little, and do not truly hurt unless the shock is administered to the face, throat, armpit, or groin. Stun guns will not deter a determined opponent, nor one invulnerable to pain due to intoxicants or frenzy, regardless of how well you use it. They are most frequently used by unscrupulous interrogators to elicit confessions from manacled suspects, as they are only effective when held in place for several seconds and leave only a pair of small red burns (which is why about a dozen states prohibit possession of stun guns by law enforcement personnel). They are the tools of torturers and rapists, effective only against weak victims, which is why they are widely prohibited. Stun guns do little more than provide a false sense of security, which is dangerous. Do not waste your money on one of these silly toys.

## Ninja Crap

Ninjutsu can teach warriors a great deal about stealth, improvised weaponry, and self-hypnosis. Masters of the art have been retained by our government as instructors for the Special Operations Command, whose Delta Force and SEAL Teams have, in turn, instructed elite law enforcement units (such as the FBI Hostage Rescue Teams, the DEA's Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Teams, and the SWAT teams of many metropolitan police departments).

However, the vast majority of persons claiming to be ninja can uniformly be classified as "ninja-freaks." The typical ninja freak is seriously mentally ill, has limited contact with reality, and is invariably a social outcast. He has learned his "skills" through martial arts magazines and action-adventure movies. He may have purchased books (usually of dubious credibility) purporting to disclose "Secrets of Invisibility," or "Death Touch" techniques. The ninja-freak will always have a costume (usually either a polyester ninja outfit bought via mail order, or a black jumpsuit with mask and gloves) hanging in his closet, and will often walk the streets dressed entirely in black.

While a few serious martial artists may choose one of these items as a potential "backup" weapon, the ninja-freak will rely almost exclusively upon them (in addition to a tanto or dagger), usually carrying several concealed upon his person at any given time. Be advised, even though the typical ninja-freak is a psychotic loser, he has probably practiced extensively with his weapons and will always attack with intent to kill (although he may be over-confident in his ability to do so).

**THROWING STARS:**

Throwing stars, also known as shaken, come in numerous shapes and sizes. They are usually between 3" and 4" in diameter, with between 3 and 8 points, and are typically wafer thin and constructed of poor quality metal that does not take an edge. Better quality stars exist, made of heavy steel and taking a fine edge, but they are quite expensive, usually over twenty dollars apiece.

Weapons similar to the throwing star include: ringlike chakrum, rectangular steel "throwing cards," Chinese tassled darts, common finned darts, and various novelty weapons (such as the silly "Batman" star).

Throwing stars, and other small concealable missle weapons, are typically carried in clusters of three or more, which are slipped into special pouches which are affixed to one's belt, dropped in a pocket, or sewn inside clothing. If a pouch is not used, they will snag and tear pocket linings. Sometimes a detachable star is seen attached to a belt buckle. Small dull stars are sometimes worn as pendants or attached to keyrings, but they are useless as missle weapons.

Stars can be thrown numerous ways with great accuracy up to about thirty feet, although proficiency requires weeks of practice. If desired, an entire handful can be put into flight simultaneously (with drastically reduced accuracy). Stars tend to have poor penetration and are unlikely to cause serious injury. Their primary purpose is to deter pursuit or harass from a

distance. Certain nasty individuals have been known to file grooves along the points to better retain toxic paste, but that would make transport extremely hazardous.

At grappling range, even a poor quality star can be grasped in the hand and raked across exposed flesh or driven into bone, although it would be difficult to safely get a secure grip on stars with more than 4 points.

Typically, throwing stars are poor weapons and are illegal to carry nearly everywhere. Hollywood has vastly over-rated their effectiveness. They are not recommended.

**GARROTTES:**

Garrottes are typically a length of wire, cable, or knotted cord with a small grip at either end (typically a ring, loop, or peg, though full-sized handles are occasionally seen). They are primarily used to assassinate someone from behind via strangulation (although a thin piece of piano or trapper's wire can cut into the throat like a cheese slicer). They are not commonly thought of as a defensive weapon, however, they can also be used to block, trap, and lock. In earlier days, they were favored by spies and partisans to silently eliminate sentries. . . they are usually cleaner than a knife and are much more accessible than a crossbow or silenced firearm.

Garrottes are usually simply dropped in one's pocket, but they can be concealed in waistbands, pantlegs, sleeves, or hollowed watches. Wire saws, guitar strings, bootlaces, ties, and thin belts can all be used like a garrotte. The thuggee scarf (a traditional weapon of one of India's largest sects of murderous highwaymen) was weighted so it could be whipped around the victim's neck with one hand for the initial surprise attack. Garrottes make poor weapons, unless you are the aggressor attacking from ambush. There are about a half-dozen ways to attack with the garrotte, but the most efficient involves first slipping the wire over the target's neck, then instantly turning around (looping and tightening the wire in the process) so you are back-to-back with the target, then bending forward sharply (which yanks him off his feet with minimal effort). . . if this is done correctly, there is no defense against it. Strangling someone to death is one of the most brutal ways to kill, as it can take well over a minute to induce unconsciousness and the terrified victim will be struggling as hard as he can. It is a disgusting weapon which robs both actors of their dignity. A garrotte is the improvised weapon of last resort.

**NUNCHAKU:**

The nunchaku (often referred to as "numchucks" or "chukka sticks") typically consist of a pair of short rods connected by a length of cord, chain, or cable. The rods are usually either 12" or 14" in length and constructed of wood (although metal, acrylic, and rubberized rods are sometimes used) They usually have round shafts, but can be octagonal or square, which is far more likely to cause lacerations due to the corners. Sometimes the shafts are studded, which also increases their injury causing potential. Nunchaku are a traditional martial arts weapon and are available commercially from a variety of sources — they are also incredibly easy to make in one's garage workshop.

One modern version of nunchaku consists of a long baton (usually constructed of aluminum)

which can be twisted a certain way to pull apart into a set of nunchaku connected by a short length of cable. This weapon is marketed as the "Hide-a-Chuck," but it is nearly impossible to conceal upon one’s person and is too unwieldy for quick fluid movements. Another modernized version consists of a pair of collapsible aluminum rods (similar to the telescopic baton, but of inferior craftsmanship) connected by a chain. The weapon extends when swung, but generally is not equipped to lock into position. A belt sheath is provided for ease of transport. Both of these travesties fall into the "novelty weapon" category, although some ignorant punks may carry them around in hopes of impressing their friends and intimidating their enemies.

Also worthy of mention is something known as a "mini-chuck." These are basically a variation of the traditional nunchaku (although there is also a "Hide-a-Chuck" version) with shorter rods (typically 8") and a longer chain. These nasty weapons are designed primarily for concealment upon one’s person. They cannot be flipped and rolled like traditional nunchaku, making them useless for martial arts forms, but they are good for beating someone with. Their short range makes them best suited for sapping someone from behind. They could conceivably be used for self-defense, but far better options exist.

The nunchaku was made famous by the Bruce Lee movies of the 70s, and immediately became popular with martial arts students and wannabes. They can be twirled in an impressive display, and can easily be swung at speeds exceeding 100 mph. They are difficult weapons to master, however, and many novices have injured themselves. The nunchaku is best used simply to beat someone with. The flexible center makes it far deadlier than a rigid stick, and even an amateur can break bones with one (with minimal effort). Although sheaths are available, they are typically stuck in a back pocket or tucked in a belt. They are a favorite weapon of gang members and street punks, and are often encountered on the street. Although it may be legal for you to possess a set of nunchaku (although some states restrict ownership to certified martial arts students or ban them altogether), carrying them concealed upon one’s person is a crime nearly everywhere.

**FIGHTING CHAINS:**

True fighting chains include the manrikikusari (sometimes spelled manrikigusari or referred to as a "manriki") and the kusari-fundo, although more obscure variations exist. Typically, they consist of a length of chain (usually about 2 feet in length) with a metal weight at either end. The weights on the manrikikusari appear to be cylindrical handles, while those on the kusari-fundo are more like multi-faceted balls. Both are widely available from martial arts suppliers, and are usually either chrome plated or blackened.

In the hands of a skilled practitioner, the fighting chain can be swung several different ways and used to bludgeon, strangle, block, or bind. In the hands of a street punk, it will be used primarily to beat someone with. The metal weights, swung at speed, can easily break bone. All flexible weapons require practice to be used effectively, and it is easy to inadvertently injure oneself. One should never attempt to emulate the characters in action films who wrap a length of chain around their hand to serve as a form of improvised metal knuckles — such foolishness is virtually guaranteed to pulverize one’s fingerbones upon impact (unlike solid metal knuckles, chain links are movable).

Similar to the fighting chain is the steel whip used by wushu practitioners. It is a series of metal

rods connected by links which can be concealed upon one's person, but the weight of this weapon and the skill required to utilize it effectively make it unlikely to be encountered. A length of thin chain affixed to a small handle (as seen in the movie Dragon) is an unnamed kung-fu weapon primarily used to whip with. It is not available commercially, but could be easily fabricated.

Streetfighters sometimes keep a length of heavy chain in a pocket, wear it as a decorative belt, or hang it from a jacket epaulet. This weapon is especially popular amongst punk rockers and metalheads, as it is easily incorporated into their "costumes."

Fighting chains are seldom specifically prohibited by law, but would definitely be considered "dangerous instruments" due to the fact that they are specifically designed as weapons and have no legitimate utilitarian use. However, a bicycle security chain with attached padlock is legal to possess (provided, of course, you happen to be riding your bicycle at the time).

**CLAWS:**

Several types of claw-type weapons are known to exist, though they are seldom seen outside of books devoted to exotic weaponry. The two most widely known claws are the tekagi and the bagh nakh.

The tekagi is better known as the "ninja climbing claw." Several designs of climbing claw exist, but the only one sold commercially has four short curved points that project from a steel bar crossing the palm horizontally and held in place with an array of nylon straps. These are sold in pairs, but typically only a single claw is stowed in one's pocket until needed. The commercial version can maim someone, but they are rather chintzy and aren't very good for climbing. They are more of a deterrent than an actual offensive weapon, as they can inflict painful lacerations that will result in jagged scars, but cannot kill unless the throat is torn open. Some misguided people have altered them to fit over their knuckles, but this only results is making the weapon less effective and provides ample opportunity to break a finger. Traditional tekagi are far more substantial and incorporate a vertical bar that can be used to block a sword strike (on the commercial version, this bar becomes a nylon strap).

The bagh nakh was a favorite of one of the many sects of bandits in 19th century India. They consist of an iron bar with a loop at either end and curved claw-like projections along the length. The bar is grasped in the hand so the claws extend between the fingers of one's closed fist. They are designed to rip out throats and disembowel, making the bandit's target appear to have been attacked by one of the many tigers that freely roamed the wilds of India in the past. Bagh nakh are not available through commercial channels, though anyone with basic metalworking skills could easily fashion a set. Similar weapons have been fabricated by driving several nails through a wooden fistload.

A guy named Axl out of NYC puts out a line of surreal jewelry in clawlike designs. His "Protector" series of silver rings have a clawlike projection running along the length of one's finger that is exposed when the hand is clenched into a fist. Their downside is that they tend to incorporate prosthetic eyeballs (making them rather gaudy) and are in the $500 price range — they are said to be popular amongst the bikers and musicians who can afford them. A similar series of rings has an eagle skull design and is smaller and much more affordable (being mass

produced rather than hand crafted). He also makes sets of clawlike fingertip attachments. Various unscrupulous individuals have mass produced poor quality pewter castings similar to Mr Axl's designs, sometimes marketed as "finger armor." Unlike silver, pewter cannot be sharpened into a proper flesh ripping implement.

**BLINDING POWDERS:**

Blinding compounds tossed, blown, or sprayed into the face of an enemy is a favorite tactic of practitioners of ninjutsu and kali. These can range from annoying distractions, to caustic substances capable of inducing permanent blindness, to toxic substances capable of inducing a variety of possible reactions (paralysis, stupor, unconsciousness, hallucinations, nausea, blistering, ect.) including death.

Methods of delivery can include: emptying a hollow tube of powder with a sweep of the arm, emptying an open pouch with a sweep of the arm, tossing a powder-filled eggshell at the target, blowing powder into the face from a hollow tube, tossing powder from a gloved hand, dumping powder from above, spraying powder from an aerosol cannister, or firing a blast of powder from some form of infernal device. In most cases, however, (especially with non-toxic substances, like pepper) the powder is simply tossed from a bare hand.

Common blinding powders can include any of the following, or a combination thereof: cayenne pepper, wasabi powder, black pepper, salt, alum, glitter, iron filings, sawdust, graphite, ashes, scouring powder, sand, gravel, BBs, ground glass, or drain cleaner; however, even nastier compounds (like LSD-25, powdered sulfuric acid, dioxin, plutonium dust, or anthrax spores) are known to have been used in the past (although such highly toxic substances would require specialized containers as well as protective clothing to be utilized safely).

Blinding powders should be kept as simple and as friendly as possible. A handful of aquarium gravel or baggie of cayenne pepper kept in one's pocket is effective as well as legal. Temporary blindness works just as well as permanent blindness if escape is your primary goal, and the risk of vengeance or legal repercussions is drastically reduced. Besides, it is possible that you might inadvertently contaminate yourself as well.

**SHOE WEAPONS:**

Shoe weapons are weapons hidden in, or attached to, one's shoe or boot. Most commonly encountered is the shiv secured in a sheath sewn to the shaft (inside or out) of a tall boot. Next would be the flexible blade hidden under the insole or the miniature knife (lockblade or "thumb dagger") concealed in a hollowed out heel. Seldom seen is the small blade riveted to the toe and used to kick with. Short spikes are sometimes affixed to the toes of steel-toed boots. Sharpened spurs can cut with certain types of kick, but generally aren't very effective. Metal cleats can inflict multiple punctures to those stomped upon. Rarely seen is the "heel gun," which fires a .22 LR cartridge from a muzzle in the front of the heel when the back of the heel is struck against a hard surface, like a wall, floor, or sidewalk. The majority of these weapons are little more than ineffective novelty items.

## Street Guns

Criminals can obtain quality handguns through burglarizing residences, breaking into vehicles, or purchasing them at exorbitant prices from black market dealers, but they are usually highly prized treasures kept hidden in a secure location rather than carried on a daily basis (although exceptions exist among gang leaders, enforcers, and dumbasses who don't know any better).

As a general rule, guns carried regularly by street criminals tend to be inexpensive and easily ditched. In many cases (especially amongst knowledgeable drug dealers and gangbangers) the gun will not be concealed upon one's person, but rather hidden in close proximity to where they loiter, giving them some degree of "deniability" in the event they are confronted by police and subjected to a search..

**HIDEOUT GUNS:**

Commonly dismissed as "worthless" or "mouse guns" by self-proclaimed weapons experts, derringers, micro-revolvers, and tiny automatic pistols all are good for self defense if legally carried.

These tiny firearms can be dropped in pockets, slipped in boots, or worn on a lanyard around the neck. Double-action .22 derringers can be concealed within, and fired from, specially designed billfolds. Derringers and micro-revolvers can be clipped into special belt buckles. Miniature handguns can be hidden inside fake pagers clipped to one's belt or worn in concealment holsters sewn to one's hat lining or jockstrap. They are sometimes slipped under a garter. Dropped in a jacket pocket or purse compartment by itself, it can remain "forgotten" until required. With the aid of a competently designed concealment rig (ankle, pocket, belly band, or "pop-up"), they become virtually invisible. They are designed for everyday carry and emergency use.

They are an effective deterrent, especially when fired, as they are certain to cause injury — and possibly death. Knowing that even a small gun can injure or kill at a distance, regardless of its owner's skill or dexterity, criminals tend to be far more respectful of such weapons than they'd be of a stick or blade. A twitch of a finger can send a hot metal projectile zipping through the air quicker than any man can dodge, tearing through flesh and spilling blood without any exertion of effort. A stick or blade, however, requires skill, speed, and strength to be effective, and can be blocked, dodged, or taken away.

Miniature handguns are designed to be accessible and discreet. . . they are often inaccurate, low powered, and uncomfortable to fire. They cannot be counted on to immediately stop a determined attacker, but they will inflict a wound and cause pain if one's target is hit. They are excellent for stopping pursuit. A "cub" automatic firing anemic .22 shorts or .25 ACPs can be fired rapidly into an attacker's face, or a full clip can be emptied to deter pursuit — the maligned .25 ACP is far superior in this capacity to a handful of throwing stars! For a greater assurance of stopping power, derringers can be had in higher calibers.

Cheap, single-action, striker-fired "hammerless" automatics (like the Raven .25 ACP and Jennings "J-22") MUST be carried with an empty chamber for safety reasons, which can significantly reduce their immediate usefulness. To carry such a weapon with a chambered

round — even with the safety on — is the epitome of stupidity. Many gang members have accidentally wounded themselves while drawing cheap automatics from a pocket. Walther, Seecamp, Beretta, and Iver-Johnson all offer minuscule double-action pistols that can safely be carried with a chambered round for immediate use.

Provided you are legally permitted to have a concealed handgun on your person (although the 2nd Amendment guarantees this right, many jurisdictions have made it a crime for law-abiding citizens to do so), this should be your hidden weapon of choice.

**SAWED-OFF RIFLES & SHOTGUNS:**

Sawed-off longarms have always been popular with criminals — especially juvenile delinquents. Longarms are far more easily acquired than handguns, and a half-hour with a hacksaw can turn one into a concealable weapon. Most sawed-off rifles and shotguns, however, are so heavy and bulky that they cannot be concealed under anything less than a heavily insulated arctic parka. These weapons are most often carried in gymbags and backpacks or simply tossed in one's car.

Amongst street criminals, the two most commonly encountered sawed-off longarms are the break-action single-barrel shotgun (usually in either 12 or 20 gauge) and the bolt-action .22 rifle.

The break-action single-barrel shotgun is seldom cut down to less than a foot in overall length, making it nearly impossible to conceal upon one's person. In this configuration, it is often referred to as a "sawed-off" or "boo-yah."

"Hillbilly dueling pistols" kick like a mule! Even the relatively low-powered 20 gauge cartridge will recoil about twice as hard as a .44 magnum when fired from such a weapon. The sawed-off shotgun must be fired with both hands — ideally, with the bracing hand on top of the barrel to further absorb the recoil. If a person were to fire such a weapon one-handed, and was unprepared for the violent recoil, they could easily fracture their trigger finger or hit themselves over the head with the barrel. While it is possible to fire such a weapon one-handed, it most certainly is not recommended.

The strong recoil makes it difficult to reload this weapon quickly, so a gunman can easily be rushed and disarmed after firing his first shot. If the shotgun has an exposed hammer (as most of them do) it can be prevented from firing by forcing one's hand between the hammer and firing pin (of course, this should never be attempted unless you feel you are about to be executed and have nothing to lose).

The sawed-off shotgun, even when loaded with birdshot (as the majority of them are) can inflict horrendous wounds at point blank range, nearly turning a man inside-out. At 5 feet away, it can pepper a target with an incredibly wide shot spread. At 10 feet away, however, you'd be lucky to place a half-dozen pellets on target, and at 15 feet away, your target will most likely be unscathed. This is a lousy weapon best suited for shooting someone in the back. Loaded with buckshot, this weapon can literally fill a hallway with a cloud of lead (although it is unlikely that you'll hit a vital area), so body armor and ballistic shields would definitely be in order. Be aware that sawed-off shotguns (as well as improvised rat-trap-fired shotguns) are

often employed as "set gun traps," which will fire at anyone unfortunate to open a door so rigged (use a mirror to check for tripwires).

The bolt-action .22 rifle will also be a single-shot weapon unless it is equipped with an operational magazine (an underbarrel tubular magazine will no longer be functional). If it has an operational magazine, the weapon can quickly be reloaded simply by working the bolt. The cut-down .22 has light recoil and is marginally more accurate than the sawed-off shotgun, but it has minimal stopping power. Minimal stopping power combined with single-shot capacity make this piss-poor weapon amount to little more than a reloadable zipgun. Sometimes encountered among gang members is the cut-down Ruger 10/22 with detachable banana clip. Although low-powered and inaccurate (due to the altered barrel), the magazine capacity of 25, 30, or even 50 rounds makes it a force to be reckoned with — especially if the shooter has extra magazines. This extremely nasty weapon is similar in many ways to the far more powerful TEC-9 and MAC-10 — inaccurate "bullet hoses" favored by more affluent criminals.

Cutting down any rifle or shotgun below legal length is a major felony under both state and federal law. If you are found in possession of (or even in close proximity to) such a weapon, you can reasonably expect to go to prison.

**PENGUNS, ZIPGUNS, & SIMILAR DEVICES:**

Penguns are just what they sound like: guns designed to look like a pen. Some actually do resemble a pen at first glance, but most look more like a marker-sized metal tube with a pocket-clip attached. Their primary strength is concealability. There are over a dozen types of pengun. The majority fire a single .22 LR cartridge. Most are either unsafe or require several steps to arm. I have seen one that folds and clicks into a pistol-like configuration prior to use They are more suited for assassination and clandestine service than self defense.

A similar weapon, the "Stinger," is similarly flawed. It comes in several versions, but is typically a short cylindrical device with a hole in one end to serve as a muzzle. It usually fires a .22 LR cartridge, and often has a rounded end for (ahem) maximum concealment possibilities. An oversized version, looking much like a tube sticking out of a bicycle handgrip, fires a .410 shotshell.

Penguns and Stingers are seldom seen anymore due to strict federal laws concerning "disguised firearms." At one time "Penguin," and other companies, offered a metal pengun device that fired teargas cartridges that screwed into one end. A bored-out bolt with identical threads could be used to fire a .25 ACP round, but I don’t know why anyone would want to bother as the resulting weapon would be pathetically weak, highly illegal, and only accurate enough for a contact shot. Still available are "pen-flare" devices, usually made of plastic, which fire a tiny luminous signal flare. A pen-flare will definitely startle someone and can burn deep into soft tissue, but is inaccurate and generally ineffective for inflicting serious injury.

Illegal homemade "zip-guns" are often designed in a similar fashion. They typically consist of a short tube (cut-down rifle barrel, steel pipe, or even the aluminum tubing from a radio antennae) with a firing mechanism at one end. These crude mechanisms typically consist of a plunger that is either slapped with the palm of the hand or pulled back and released (snapping back by means of a coil spring or elastic band). Sometimes they are securely taped to a piece

of wood carved into a pistol grip shape. Zip guns constructed by prisoners typically consist of a metal tube, a .22 LR cartridge, and a rock. Needless to say, crudely constructed firearms made from inferior materials are often more dangerous to the user than the target, due to their tendency to explode.

The "blast rod" (for want of a better name) is similar to the "trombone-style" shotguns fabricated by guerrilla fighters. This crude device is made of two pipes that slide together, one forming the barrel and the other having a fixed firing-pin at the base — the weapon is fired by slamming the two pieces together. The blast rod is basically a drastically shortened (yawara to baton-sized) trombone shotgun that is typically held in one hand and jabbed forcefully into the target, firing upon impact. The two pieces can be held together with a rudimentary gasket. "Knuckle guns" have been fabricated from small pipe fittings and work on a similar principal. The muzzle extends between the fingers of one's closed fist, and the weapon fires (typically a .22 LR or .32 ACP cartridge) upon impact.

Similar to both the Stinger and the zip-gun are the flat multi-barreled firearms sometimes offered for sale in Mexican border towns. These devices can fire several .22 magnum rounds individually or nearly simultaneously (by rippling the actuator buttons) by means of multiple coil-spring firing mechanisms. The device appears to be a flat metal box with a row of holes drilled in one end corresponding to the same number of guide-slots and actuator buttons along one side. It is typically carried decocked, as there is no safety mechanism and the device could easily be fired inadvertently while in one's pocket. The device typically swings open on a hinge to reload. Another version of this device utilizes a pair (or trio) of stubby barrels which must be unscrewed from the receiver to reload. These devices have been manufactured overseas as well as domestically, but are exclusively a black market item. These designs have also been incorporated into belt buckles, which can fire rounds sideways from the wearer (although this variation is rare).

Distantly related to the pengun is the "blowpen" marketed by ASP. This device, sold primarily as a novelty item, appears to be a thick fountain pen with a tube running through its length, from which can be fired miniature blowgun darts. Accuracy and velocity are limited, which restricts one to point blank range. The tiny darts are incapable of causing injury unless fired directly into the eye; however, if the darts were to be treated with a potent neurotoxin, the blowpen toy could be transformed into a passable (though improbable) assassination device. A similar device could be fabricated from any short length of narrow tubing, including a drinking straw. One obscure weapon is the "poisoned dart gun pen," which was made in several versions (typically using a compressed gas cartridge for propulsion) and issued to Soviet intelligence officers. Very few are in the hands of collectors, and no attempt has been made to market reproductions commercially.

Pengun-like firing mechanisms have been disguised within: lipstick tubes, pagers, Zippo lighters, belt buckles, tire pressure gauges, penlights, motorcycle handgrips, large bolts, tobacco pipes, cameras, and canes. "Trombone-style" firing devices have been concealed within or disguised as: lug wrenches, socket wrenches, motorcycle shock absorbers, and highway flares. These weapons are typically individual prototypes crudely fashioned at a garage workbench, although the rare exception may exist. Although most of these weapons have the stated purpose of "self-defense," they are utterly worthless in this capacity. Their primary function is to frustrate cursory searches for weapons and contraband at official checkpoints. They are best suited for intelligence officers, terrorists, and assassins (although they are

popular with gang members and professional criminals as well). They are prohibited nearly everywhere.

**BANG STICK:**

The bang stick (sometimes referred to as a "shark stick") is a device marketed to scuba divers to defend against shark attack. There are several designs marketed under different names. Some use a CO2 cartridge to propel a piston-like spearhead out the tip, but the ones we'll discuss here consist of a cylinder at the end of a rod which fires a cartridge (5.56 mm or 12 gauge shotshell) into a shark's body upon impact.

The rods come in varying lengths, from spear-sized to just over a foot in length. The shorter ones could be concealed under a heavy coat quite easily, and they have a safety mechanism as well. These well-designed tools are reliable and safe to use, unlike the trombone-style shotguns referred to above. They are legal to purchase and own, provided they are used for their intended purpose (it would be highly illegal to have a loaded bang stick concealed on one's person while walking downtown, however). After firing its single round, the bang stick is substantial enough to use as a bludgeon. Homemade versions of this weapon have occasionally been encountered.

## Paramilitary Weapons

Military-style weapons are popular amongst members of extremist militant groups (usually with a well-defined, though unrealistic, political, religious, or racial agenda). Such groups are often monitored by the FBI for suspicion of advocating terrorist acts.

These weapons are also highly prized by "armchair commandos" who falsely claim prior attachment to elite military units and require physical "proof" (often in the form of mail order insignia, medals, and berets) to add credibility to their lies.

These weapons are seldom carried on the street, unless the criminal intends to put them to use in the immediate future, however, they are often encountered in residences and clubhouses. Battle, assault, sniper, and anti-material rifles have not been included, nor have the various "heavy weapons."

**TRENCH KNIVES:**

Trench knives were popular during WWI, and reproductions (of varying quality and style) are available at gun shows as well as through numerous mail-order sources.

Typically, they combine a knucklebow or set of brass knuckles with a large fixed blade (usually either dagger or bowie style). Often, the knuckle protection is equipped with lugs or spikes to maximize the potential damage from a punch. The pommel is usually set with some sort of projection to augment crushing strikes to the skull.

The knuckle protection inhibits one's ability to shift one's grip upon the knife, which can be a

liability in combat. They are best suited for unskilled fighters who want to be able to inflict injuries simply by flailing away blindly. Due to the fact that metal knuckles are incorporated into the design, they are illegal to possess nearly everywhere (although they are often found stuck in a table or hanging on a wall).

**BAYONETS:**

Bayonets were originally intended to be affixed to the end of a rifle barrel, but are often used for hand-to-hand combat as well as for utilitarian purposes. They come in a wide variety of sizes and shapes, with versions from WWI resembling short swords, and modern ones being more similar to the USMC Ka-Bar combat knife. "Spike" bayonets (which are attached to a hinge under the barrel or inserted directly into the muzzle) will not be discussed here.

Bayonets usually have a single edge (which is often difficult to sharpen) and tend to be extremely durable. Many have undersized grips or mounting hardware which makes them uncomfortable to hold in one's hand. Being heavy, awkward, and (usually) dull, they tend to make lousy weapons. One would probably be better served by a quality butcher knife.

**PILUM BALLISTIC KNIFE:**

The pilum ballistic knife (also known as a "springblade," "Florida knife," or "flying Dutchman") was originally designed as a spring propelled bayonet intended for limited issue to SPETsNAZ (Soviet special forces) personnel. After a few examples were brought home as war trophies, the "Florida Knife Company" manufactured thousands of reproductions, which were primarily sold mail-order through publications like Solder of Fortune. Shortly thereafter, congress banned it, but a "ballistic mace" and "ballistic grappling hook" are still available. The "ballistic knife" can still be legally purchased, provided the coil spring is not included.

This weapon looks like a short metal baton, which is pulled apart to reveal a small dirk blade. It can be used normally, or a small lever on the hilt can be pressed, firing the blade into a target up to twenty feet away with passable accuracy. The blade is fired via a powerful compressed coil spring, propelling it much harder than a man can throw a knife. A stabilizer tube makes it fly straight and true. It will sink up to the hilt in meat, and will stick in bone. It has no safety, which is not good, as the spring is very strong. The baton-like sheath is the only safety mechanism, preventing it from piercing one's leg in the event of an accidental discharge. The pilum is illegal in all 50 states.

**GRENADES:**

Hand grenades (as opposed to rifle grenades or grenade cartridges) are small bombs meant to be tossed at one's enemy. There are many forms of grenade, but the ones we'll discuss here are: fragmentation, gas, stun, and smoke.

Military fragmentation grenades tend to be heavy, bulky, and difficult to conceal, but they are a favorite weapon of terrorists. A modern fragmentation grenade is powerful enough to flip a small car over, whereas older versions were significantly weaker. Grenades are most effective versus standing targets within an enclosed area. Against prone targets outdoors, they are

mostly ineffective. Modern grenades can reasonably be expected to kill everything within a 10 foot radius and injure anyone within 30 feet. The old "pineapple" grenades, as well as most homemade pipe bombs, are far less effective, usually blowing into about a dozen large fragments traveling at about 800 feet per second as opposed to hundreds of steel slivers traveling at well over 10,000 feet per second.

The Dutch "V-40" was a golfball sized "mini-grenade" issued in bulk to SOG units during the Vietnam war, but they are seldom seen anymore. While they could potentially kill one's enemy, they were more typically used to deter pursuit. They could not inflict the same number of casualties as a larger grenade, but you could throw them much further and could store half a dozen in a single pocket. A pipe bomb similar to the mini-grenade could be made from a 1" X 1" piece of galvanized steel pipe with two end caps, filled with smokeless powder and fitted with a short length of time fuse (but that would be a felony at both the state and federal level). An inferior version of this device is constructed of a spent $CO_2$ cartridge filled with matchhead shavings (and plugged with a piece of firecracker fuse taped into place), and is often found in the hands of teenaged hooligans.

Gas grenades are usually either in cannister or ball form. They can be either bursting or aerosol fogger type. Typically, they are tear gas (CN, CS, or OC), but other gases exist as well. Nausea gas and mild nerve gases (resulting in temporary disorientation, hallucinations, or paralysis) have been loaded into cannister grenades for riot control purposes, but have never been used domestically (officially). The Soviets have been known to make occasional use of poison gas grenades. Cyanide gas grenades can easily be improvised in the home of a terrorist, provided he has the chemicals and instructions. Insecticide foggers have a similar effect to dilute war gases (blistering, convulsions, internal hemorrhaging, ect.), and often share common ingredients. The small fuse-lit gas grenades used for killing woodchucks generate too small a volume of gas to be effective against humans unless ignited en masse within an enclosed area.

Stun grenades fall into two categories: stunball and flash-bang. Stunball grenades are used for crowd control as well as quelling prison riots. They are basically a non-lethal fragmentation grenade using plastic or rubber balls for shrapnel. They leave stinging welts and are unpleasant to be around. Flash-bang grenades are used to disorient barricaded criminals immediately prior to what is known as "explosive entry." They explode in a blinding flash (or series of explosions and flashes) and are favored by police SWAT teams and military counter-terrorist units. While intended exclusively for law-enforcement use, either type could end up on the black market.

Smoke grenades are used for screening, signaling, and fire simulations. They are available as either military cannister grenades or "novelty" fuze-lit grenades. They vary greatly in the amount of smoke generated. Smoke can be colored, white, grey, or black; it can also be wispy or thick. Some smoke grenades can generate well over 100,00 cubic feet of thick grey smoke that will not disperse for hours in the absence of wind. Many smoke grenades generate enough heat to ignite combustible materials. A small plastic container (like a film cannister) filled with flashpowder and lit with a fuze will explode with a huge cloud of smoke. "Ninja smoke balls" are chemical pellets (usually homemade) that explode into a small cloud of smoke upon impact with a hard surface. Smoke grenades can be used for evading pursuit or camouflaging movement.

**SUBMACHINEGUNS:**

Submachineguns (SMGs) are defined as fully-automatic weapons which fire pistol ammunition (usually 9mm). Contrary to what Hollywood would have us believe, SMGs are seldom encountered on the street, however, many militant groups have taken to stockpiling them. It is possible that a survivalist of the "crazed loner" variety may keep a loaded automatic weapon under the bed, but such an occurrence would be highly unlikely (as will soon be made clear). Paranoids, racists, and mass murderers all dream of owning automatic weaponry, but fully automatic firearms are incredibly difficult to obtain. Most freaks and criminals eventually have to settle for easily obtainable semi-automatics (which the sensationalistic press often identify as "high-capacity military weapons," erroneously implying select-fire capability).

Most people are unaware that, in many states, it is actually possible for a law-abiding citizen to legally acquire an automatic weapon of his very own. This entails applying for a "Class III Federal Firearms License," which is a tedious process involving fingerprints, photographs, and an extensive background investigation. After the application has been approved, if you intend to obtain a submachinegun, an agent from the BATF will come to your home to ensure that you have a theft-resistant safe as well as a top-quality security system with auto-dialer. After the agent has been satisfied that the submachinegun cannot easily be stolen, you will be permitted to purchase one from an authorized Class III dealer. In addition to the exorbitant cost of the weapon itself, you will be required to pay an additional federal tax of $200, and the ATF will be authorized to make unannounced visits for the purpose of "inspecting" your collection. According to statistics, no legally acquired automatic weapon has ever been used in a crime.

On rare occasions, SMGs have been imported from overseas (usually with shipments of cocaine or heroin), but most SMGs in circulation amongst criminals have either been the result of a semi-automatic weapon being altered to accept full-auto replacement parts, have been assembled from a partially incomplete mail-order "kit," or have been manufactured from scratch in a garage machine shop using widely available templates. It is difficult, expensive, and risky to attempt to convert a semi-automatic firearm to "full-auto" or "select-fire" capability, and many firearms have been irreparably damaged in the process. Typically, this is the method used by an otherwise law-abiding collector whose only criminal intent is to keep the contraband weapon locked in his safe.

Sten gun kits have been widely available for some time, and only recently have advertisements for them disappeared. Typically, the weapon is complete except for the prohibited receiver, for which a section of steel tubing has been provided along with templates and detailed instructions for cutting and drilling. After the receiver has been fabricated, the arduous process of fitting together a handful of tiny spring-loaded parts begins. . . most cretins lack both the patience and skill for such precise work, and their attempts would be doomed to failure. Individual sections of the sheet metal frame and receiver for the MAC style SMGs also have been available from mail-order sources, along with dozens of "replacement parts" to facilitate assembly. Various "decommissioned" military weapons, including SMGs, are still available as "display pieces"— generally, they are over 90% intact, with either a section of the receiver cut away or an aluminum "dummy" installed in its place, to prevent it from being fired. If the altered (or bogus) receiver were to be replaced with one fashioned in one’s home workshop, the weapon could possibly become operational once again.

Serious militants, however, have basement factories capable of producing hundreds of SMGs from scratch, provided there are enough materials. Templates and instruction manuals for

building various Sten-type weapons from sections of steel tubing are widely available, and to do so would be a simple task for a skilled machinist with the proper tools. MAC and Uzi-style weapons are more difficult to construct, but would not be beyond the capabilities of a master machinist inclined to break the law.

Submachineguns are typically stockpiled (along with pallets of ammunition) by the wealthier militant organizations — particularly those with an apocalyptic vision of the future. Normally, illegal automatic weapons are packed with grease (or dessicant) and buried in a remote location for future use, as their possession is a very serious offense. However, on rare occasions certain criminal groups (typically either foreigners or immature gangbangers) may use their automatic weapons to perpetrate robberies, or to wage war against enemy gangs. You have little risk of encountering a submachinegun on the street unless you've been targeted for assassination by a gang which sees your activities as a serious threat to their continued existence.

## Afterword

Just about every possible exotic weapon you might discover in the hands of professional criminals (or the criminally demented) has been addressed. Literally hundreds of bizarre weapons exist, however, which are either too rare or impractical to discuss here. A few examples include: flame weapons, gyrojet pistols, knife pistols, sleeve guns, hat guns, briefcase guns, electronically fired guns, remotely fired guns, guns concealed within prosthetic limbs, cigarette guns, tubular daggers, poison-filled squirtguns, and the ever-malevolent hypodermic syringe. Silenced weapons (particularly the Ruger Mk II and the Makarov) are surprisingly easy to come by, due to the abundance of "repack & repair kits" which were on the market not too long ago, but due to the fact that it is extremely unlikely that you'd be faced with one in a random street encounter, they have been excluded.

Hollywood inventions (such as the "gun on the roller-track rig strapped to the forearm" and the "wristband mounted switchblade"), as well as poisons (all sorts, including bioweapons) and technologically advanced devices (such as ultrasonic disruptors and radiological weapons) have also been excluded. However, certain books and Internet websites provide detailed instructions for constructing such gadgetry, so there is always the possibility that these things will one day be encountered in the hands of criminals.

Knowledge is power. If you are aware of the existence of certain hidden weapons — as well as their strengths and weaknesses — you are less likely to be taken by surprise, and will be better able to protect yourself.

Good luck to you all.